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School Committee Minutes 03-25-2003

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2003
7:30 PM

Present: David McKenna, Chair Joani LaMachia
Suzanne Owayda, Vice Chair Denis Sullivan
Paul Schlichtman, Secretary Martin Thrope
Barbara Goodman

Superintendent: Kathleen Donovan
Chief Financial Officer: David Kale
Asst. Superintendent: Joanne Gurry
Special Education Director: Marilyn Bisbicos
Student Representative: Sean Garballey

Call to order: 7:35 PM

Chair Dave McKenna requested a moment of silence in honor of Ilene Levin APS teacher for 28 years who passed away after a battle with cancer.

Recognized AHS senior Anne Woodbury as the recipient of the MIAA Sportsmanship Hockey Award for 2002-2003.

Welcomed back Assistant Supt. Joanne Gurry after her absence.

RECOGNITION

School Committee members David McKenna and Denis Sullivan were recognized for their years of service on the Arlington School Committee (David McKenna 15 years, Denis Sullivan 6 years). They were presented with plaques of the rebuilt/renovated schools in Arlington, chairs bearing the Town logo and years of service; in addition Mr. McKenna was presented with a scrapbook chronicling his five elections and accomplishments on the Committee.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

.. APS parents Jeff Carver, Jane Culbert, and Kate Cubeta spoke relative to cuts affecting the A.C.E. Program (Academic Challenge and Enrichment). The parents acknowledged the need for cuts in the budget and even in the ACE program itself but requested that the total program not be eliminated.

.. APS parents David Reiss and Doug Rosner spoke relative to the APS Field Trip Parental Consent, Release from Liability and Indemnity Agreement. They voiced concerns that the concerns of parents have not been addressed and requested that a subcommittee be held to engage parents and to find ways to narrow the scope of the release.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Mr. Schlichtman reviewed correspondence. Mr. Schlichtman read a letter that the School Committee sent to Gov. Romney inviting him to visit APS.

Approval of Minutes:

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Barbara Goodman it was unanimously Voted to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 11, 2003 as amended.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Owayda it was unanimously Voted to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 25, 2003 as amended.

Chair Dave McKenna read a letter from Arlington teacher Mary Villano thanking Supt. Donovan for her continued support and inclusion of staff members in the budget process.

REDEVELOPMENT BOARD

Scheduled for the next meeting.

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

Supt. Donovan requested approval of the warrant.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Ms. Owayda it was

Voted to approve warrant number 03128 in the amount of \$296,796.31. 6-1 Mr. Thrope abstained

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Approval of Kindergarten Philosophy Statement

Supt. Donovan requested approval of the Kindergarten philosophy statement as part of the application procedure needed in the accreditation process

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously

Voted to accept the kindergarten philosophy statement as presented by Supt. Donovan.

Student Exchange Program

Supt. Donovan informed Committee Members that she had a meeting with the INS who was following through on new rules established four years ago

MCAS Testing Time Arrival Change – Supt. Donovan proposed a time for the Committee's consideration relative to MCAS testing. AHS principal Steve Woodcock requested that students in grades 9,11,12 start the school day at a later time on MCAS May time test, stated that by doing so it would improve the testing environment.

Break

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Policy & Procedures/Vote File KBBA, KBBA-E, KBBA-R

On a motion by Ms. Owayda and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was unanimously

Voted to accept policy KBBA, KBBA-E, KBBA-R with changes as noted on KBBA-R

Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was

Voted to postpone the graduation requirement in fine arts to the class of 2008. 6-1 Mr. Schlichtman no

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was unanimously

Voted to postpone the graduation requirement in foreign language to the class of 2008.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded it was Ms. Goodman

Voted the reduction of the physical education requirement from 4 years to 2 years for the classes of 2004-2005; students in grades 11 & 12 would have the option of taking a physical education class as an elective to review after one year. 5 yes 2 no (Mr. Schlichtman & Mr. Thrope no)

Supt. Donovan also reported that students who participate in two sports as freshmen would have the option of waiving the physical education requirement for grade ten. This would enable students to choose another class.

Mr. Schlichtman reported that the subcommittee discussed high school requirements and scheduling, and outlined what was discussed and recommended at the subcommittee meeting:

- .. How incoming freshman would be placed in classes
- .. A concrete plan to create true college prep courses and to show how teachers will prepare to teach a new level
- .. How to determine what level students will be placed in.
- .. To create an appeals process including what parental input would be regarding placement
- .. Data showing that students are moving up into honors (would like to see 30% of students in honors classes)
- .. How to implement incorporating advanced levels back into the schedule if an override is approved.
- .. Giving students two options for scheduling
- .. Place a "Frequently Asked Questions" on line for parents
- .. How courses would be weighted in terms of class rank

One topic reviewed at length was the opportunity of students to move into levels. There was considerable discussion of the use of prerequisites to get into honors level classes. Mr. Schlichtman read the following statement, (noting that he was not asking for a vote or endorsement at this point) asking if it is something that should be further pursued in the subcommittee.

.. "The APS encourages all students to strive to meet their maximum potential. Prerequisites that are not tied to sequential course offerings are inconsistent with this vision and shall not be barriers to course selection".

Mr. Schlichtman explained that there is a high grade requirement at the Ottoson required to even be considered for the honors class and with the deletion of the advanced track it was placing a large barrier for students getting into honors.

There is a lot of belief in both the administration and teachers that there are students who strive to achieve higher

levels, can, even though they do not necessarily meet the prerequisites outlined in the booklet. Mr. Schlichtman explained that by doing so it would make the prerequisites advisory for those students who do meet the recommended prerequisite on non-sequential classes.

Mr. Thrope voiced concern over our ability to restructure a continuum of tracks in such a short time and how can that be accomplished. Supt. Donovan stated that she hoped that the override would pass and the advanced level would not be eliminated at this time; however the Superintendent acknowledged that it is a substantial change and would like to have a planned upon program and promised that the schools would do the very best that they can. She suggested a meeting with the teachers that are affected.

Ms. Goodman noted that the Curriculum & Instruction subcommittee would meet again to continue to look at the issue and have asked the high school administration to provide criteria and goals for each of the courses, a professional development plan and a process that will determine how students are accepted into each level. The advanced levels are still in place until we decide otherwise.

Mr. Schlichtman pointed out that if department heads seek to maintain prerequisites for entering into honors level at any point in the curriculum and if there is a change in our tracking structure, there would have to be some real thinking to show that those are valid thresholds that are required for success and not arbitrary barriers.

BUDGET

Supt. Donovan presented for the review of the School Committee a draft listing of the proposed add backs totaling \$3,000,000.00. The Superintendent noted that the proposal responds to the request to create a budget that we could live with, it recognized the fiscal condition of the town, requests to preserve teachers, keep class size down, and honor many items that are vital to the school system. The attached revised list reflects the feedback received from parents, teachers, school administrators, School Committee members, and others.

David Kale pointed out that the Selectmen have not established a dollar amount yet for the override the add back list is based on the Superintendent's recommendation of what a budget would look like with a \$3million add back. Mr. Kale proceeded to explain the revised list; one list with the original reductions of \$5.1million and the second set of reductions with a \$ 2,128,000.00 in reductions.

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously
Voted to move the 11:00 rule for 30 minutes

Mr. Thrope handed out a sheet for review by the Committee proposing reductions that equal 10 FTE based on the \$5.1 million reduction.

Ms. LaMachia reported that as part of a two-step process, the first was to receive input from the committee and second to refer recommendations and input to the subcommittee.

Ms. Owayda thanked the administration for creating a budget "we could live with" and stated that there are still questions to be answered and issues to be addressed but this is a starting point.

In response to Mr. Thrope's handout Chair, Dave McKenna questioned the timing of it, stating that Mr. Thrope had no idea what some of the jobs entail noting that some of the items on the list have been tried in the past without success.

David Kale, CFO, reviewed the FY2003-2003 March Budget Financial Report and explained how APS is able to project an unexpended balance of \$258,784.00. Mr. Kale explained that "cost saving strategies such as not filling vacant positions (wherever possible) and freezing all non-salary account resulted in savings as well as by not expending funds as opposed to identifying additional budget cuts halfway through fiscal year. This has allowed the school year to continue with less disruption."

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously
Voted to authorize the transfer of appropriated monies within the School General Fund Budget for FY 2002-2003 as proposed by David Kale.

Mr. McKenna responding to Mr. Thrope's request to explain his rational relative to his proposal stated that if time allowed he would allow him to explain his proposal.

PTBC UPDATE

Ms. Owayda reported that the PTBC is pressing forward to receive estimates on the Dallin School so that it will be ready to go before Town Meeting for an appropriation of money so that construction can begin January 2004. Stratton and Thompson Schools are working on designs to be submitted as soon as possible to add to SBAB list.

Supt. Donovan noted that the Governor has directed the DOE to only accept one school per district. Since we have two schools ready to submit at some point in time we may have to make a decision on which school.

NEW BUSINESS

Organizational Meeting

On a motion by Ms. Owayda and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was

Voted to schedule the organizational meeting for April 15, 2003 7:00 PM and to reschedule the regular meeting of April 8, 2003 to April 15, 2003 @ 7:30 PM. 5 yes 2 abstentions (Mr. McKenna & Mr. Sullivan)

Mr. Thrope requested an amendment that presiding duties at the organization meeting as specified in policy BDA shared by the two senior members no second on the amendment.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously
Voted to move the 11:00 rule to 11:45 pm.

.. **Sandwich Community Report**

Mr. Schlichtman noted that the Sandwich Community Report could be discussed at a later date with new members.

.. **Student Advisory Council**

Ms. Owayda reported that School Committee Members and students discussed earned responsibilities for seniors.

On a motion made by Ms. Owayda and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously
Voted to refer earned responsibilities to the Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee to review the 990-hour
requirement and to the Policy & Procedure Subcommittee to explore creating a general statement for ??

.. Mr. Thrope requested that the CFO job description be sent to Committee Members for review.

.. Ms. Goodman reminded Members of the Educational Forum on Educational Finance planned for April 29 at Town
Hall with Peter Nessen.

Chair Dave McKenna said thank you to his fellow School Committee Members and the Administration during his
service as a School Committee Member.

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was

Voted to enter executive session for the purpose of impact bargaining and a personnel issue

With the possibility of voting to approve executive session minutes upon return to open session except to adjourn RC:

Unanimous

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was unanimously

Voted to approve the executive session minutes of January 28, 2003

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was unanimously

Voted to approve the executive session minutes of February 11, 2003.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously

Voted to approve the executive session minutes of February 25, 2003.

ADJOURN @ 11:50 pm

Respectfully submitted by
Karen Tassone